

OPENING REMARKS
EASTERN REGIONAL MTS CONFERENCE
NORFOLK, VA
RADM R. C. NORTH
DECEMBER 6, 2000

GOOD AFTERNOON LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MR. KEEVER, MR. BREA, MR. HASSELL, JEFF HIGH, MY WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR, AND OTHER DISTINGUISHED GUESTS. I SEE LOTS OF THE PORT COMMUNITY HERE, ALMOST ALL THE CAPTAINS OF THE PORT FROM THE SOUTHEAST, NAVSAC MEMBERS, AND MTSNAC MEMBERS. IT IS OFTEN SAID THAT WASHINGTON, D.C. IS 36 SQUARE MILES OF BUREAUCRACY SURROUNDED BY REALITY. IT IS A PLEASURE AND HONOR FOR ME TO BE HERE AMONGST REALITY.

THANK YOU FOR AFFORDING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAY A FEW WORDS HERE THIS AFTERNOON AS YOU BEGIN YOUR CONFERENCE. I AM STANDING IN FOR VICE-ADMIRAL SHKOR, WHO SENDS HIS REGRETS. HE WANTED BE HERE, BUT HAS A MEDICAL APPOINTMENT. HE'S ASKED ME TO STAND IN FOR HIM AND I AM PLEASED TO DO SO.

YOU HAVE A VERY INTERESTING AND FULL AGENDA. I'LL TOUCH ON SOME OF THOSE ISSUES IN MY COMMENTS.

OUR COLLECTIVE GOAL IS TO ENSURE THAT U.S. PORTS WILL BE READY TO HANDLE THE EXPECTED DOUBLING—OR MAYBE EVEN TRIPLING—OF CARGO AND PASSENGERS BY THE YEAR 2020. AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, JUST LAST YEAR WE WITNESSED A 10 PERCENT GROWTH IN INTERNATIONAL WATERBORNE CONTAINER TRAFFIC.

AND IT'S NOT AS IF WE ARE DEALING WITH SOMETHING INSIGNIFICANT HERE... 95% OF ALL OVERSEAS TRADE—BY VOLUME—PASSES THROUGH OUR SEAPORTS.

BEFORE LOOKING AT WHAT LIES AHEAD, LET'S LOOK BACK AT SOME OF WHAT WE'VE DONE OVER THE PAST YEAR OR SO WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S MARINE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM—OR MTS—INITIATIVE.

WE'VE HELD A SERIES OF SEVEN REGIONAL DIALOG SESSIONS THIS PAST MAY AND JUNE TO IDENTIFY AREAS OF REGIONAL CONCERN.

A PRINCIPLE ISSUE EARLY IN THE MTS PROJECT EXPRESSED AT REGIONAL LISTENING SESSIONS AND MORE RECENTLY AT REGIONAL DIALOG SESSIONS IS COORDINATION.

- HORIZONTALLY AT NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND LOCAL LEVELS
- VERTICALLY BETWEEN THOSE LEVELS

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL, WE HAVE ICMTS AND MTSNAC, THE LOCAL LEVEL HSC'S, AND AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL, THIS GROUP. THIS REALLY IS A COASTAL FIRST - A MODEL - CONGRATULATIONS!

THIS IS REALLY IMPORTANT - MTS HAS TO BE REGIONAL AND LOCAL, AND THAT CAN'T HAPPEN FROM INSIDE THE BELTWAY.

NEXT, WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON THE CONCEPT OF A MARITIME INFORMATION HUB TO PROVIDE REAL-TIME INFORMATION TO THE MARINER, THUS ENABLING HIM OR HER TO MAKE SAFER DECISIONS ON THE WATERWAY. TO DEVELOP SUCH A HUB, WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT INFORMATION IS NEEDED. WE'RE CONDUCTING A SURVEY RIGHT NOW TO DO THAT AND EXPECT TO HAVE THE RESULTS SOMETIME THIS JANUARY. ONCE WE GET THEM, WE'LL SHARE OUR FINDINGS WITH THE INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE ON THE MTS AS WELL AS THE MTS NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

CONCERNING SAFETY AND TRAFFIC FACILITATION ON OUR NATION'S WATERWAYS, WE'RE ABOUT ¾ OF THE WAY THROUGH DOING 28 PORTS AND WATERWAYS SAFETY ASSESSMENTS (PAWSA'S). THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF THESE ASSESSMENTS IS TO NOT ONLY ESTABLISH A BASELINE FOR PORTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR VESSEL TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENTS, BUT ALSO TO PROVIDE THE PORT COMMUNITY AND THE LOCAL CAPTAIN OF THE PORT WITH AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR EVALUATING RISKS AND WORKING TOWARD LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS FOR MITIGATING THOSE RISKS.

IN ADDITION TO OUR WORK IN THE MTS, WE HAVE ALSO DEVELOPED A NEW PORT STATE CONTROL INITIATIVE TO RECOGNIZE AND REWARD QUALITY VESSELS ENTERING U.S. PORTS. FOR TOO LONG, WE HAVE FOCUSED OUR EFFORTS AND ENERGY ON IDENTIFYING SUBSTANDARD VESSELS - IT IS NOW TIME TO SHIFT THIS EFFORT TO IDENTIFY THOSE QUALITY VESSELS AND REWARD THEM ACCORDINGLY.

OVERALL, THE QUALITY OF VESSELS VISITING U.S. PORTS OVER THE PAST SIX YEARS HAS IMPROVED DRAMATICALLY... HUNDREDS OF VESSELS ARE TYPICALLY FOUND WITH FEW OR NO DEFICIENCIES. WE WANT TO REWARD THOSE VESSELS, THEREBY ENABLING US TO CONCENTRATE OUR RESOURCES ON OTHER, HIGHER RISK, ACTIVITIES.

AS SUCH, WE'LL BOARD AND INSPECT "*QUALITY*" VESSELS LESS FREQUENTLY, THUS FACILITATING PORT CALLS, CARGO MOVEMENT, AND HELPING TO REDUCE DELAYS. WE'RE LOOKING FOR OTHER INCENTIVES - INSURANCE, FINANCE, PORT FEES....

OUR NEW PORT STATE CONTROL PROGRAM IS CALLED "*QUALSHIP 21*" AND I AM HOPEFUL THAT THE INCENTIVES WILL ENCOURAGE THOSE "*QUALITY*" SHIPS TO MAINTAIN THEIR GOOD RECORDS WHILE ALSO PROVIDING AN INDUCEMENT TO THOSE VESSELS WHO NEED TO IMPROVE TO DO SO.

THE INITIAL FOCUS OF "*QUALSHIP 21*" WILL BE ON FOREIGN FLAG VESSELS; HOWEVER, WE INTEND TO EXTEND THIS PROGRAM TO COVER U.S. FLAG VESSELS OVER THE NEXT YEAR.

AND THAT'S NOT ALL...

WE'VE ALSO BEEN WORKING WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CRUISE LINES TO ADDRESS GREY WATER AND BLACK WATER POLLUTION FROM CRUISE SHIPS, AND ANS/BALLAST WATER ISSUES WITH BIMCO, INTERCARGO, AND INTERTANKO - AND INTERTANKO IS LOOKING INTO ALTERNATIVES.

AND... THE COAST GUARD'S HISTORIC ROLE AS THE LEAD PORT SECURITY AGENCY WAS RECOGNIZED IN THE FINAL REPORT OF THE INTERAGENCY COMMISSION ON CRIME AND SECURITY IN U.S. SEAPORTS. ICMTS IS WORKING ON RECOMMENDATIONS - LEGISLATION IS PENDING - AND WE WILL SEE IT IN THE NEXT CONGRESS. RESOURCES ARE A SIGNIFICANT ISSUE - MTSNAC CAN HELP US.

IN A WORLD FRAUGHT WITH POSSIBLE TERRORIST ATTACKS, I EXPECT PORT SECURITY TO BE A GROWTH BUSINESS LINE FOR THE COAST GUARD AND A KEY ELEMENT OF A SUCCESSFUL MARINE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM.

AND WHILE I THINK WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED QUITE A BIT THUS FAR... AS YOU ALL KNOW, THERE'S MUCH MORE TO DO. WE'VE TAKEN CARE OF THE EASY PART... WE'VE IDENTIFIED A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS... WE'VE ORGANIZED OURSELVES... AND, WE'VE FIGURED OUT WHERE WE WANT TO GO... NOW COMES THE TOUGH PART... FIGURING OUT THE ANSWERS... IT SHOULD BE INTERESTING...

I THINK THE KEY WILL BE COMMUNICATION...

LET ME GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT.

THE COAST GUARD'S ATLANTIC AREA COVERS A REGION THAT ENCOMPASSES ALL OR PART OF 40 STATES AND RANGES FROM THE CANADIAN-MAINE BORDER TO BROWNSVILLE TEXAS.

SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, SOME OF THE WATERWAY INTERESTS WITHIN ATLANTIC AREA EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN TO ADMIRAL SHKOR—THE ATLANTIC AREA COMMANDER—ABOUT HOW COAST GUARD CAPTAINS OF THE PORT WERE HANDLING APPROACHING STORMS—PARTICULARLY HURRICANES.

BASICALLY THEY HAD TWO CONCERNS... ONE—THAT THERE WERE DIFFERENT POLICIES IN DIFFERENT PORTS... AND, TWO—THAT THE COAST GUARD NEEDED TO BE A BIT MORE CAREFUL ABOUT ORDERING CERTAIN VESSELS TO PUT TO SEA WHEN A HURRICANE WAS APPROACHING.

WELL... ADMIRAL SHKOR SAT DOWN WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM AWO AS WELL AS OTHER SHIPPING AND BARGE INTERESTS TO HEAR THEIR CONCERNS.

AND... AFTER LISTENING TO THEM... ADMIRAL SHKOR THOUGHT THEY HAD SOME LEGITIMATE POINTS.

AND SO... HE MADE SOME CHANGES TO HOW THE CAPTAINS OF THE PORT IN ATLANTIC AREA DID BUSINESS. HE IMPLEMENTED NEW POLICIES TO ENSURE HIS MARINE SAFETY OFFICES WERE CONSISTENT IN HOW THEY HANDLED THESE SITUATIONS. AND, HE PROVIDED GUIDANCE TO HIS FIELD COMMANDERS TO BE MINDFUL THAT CERTAIN VESSELS—SUCH AS TOWING VESSELS AND BARGES—WERE LESS ABLE TO RIDE OUT A HURRICANE AT SEA.

HENCEFORTH, ALL ATLANTIC AREA CAPTAINS OF THE PORT WILL GO THROUGH THE SAME PROCEDURES 72 HOURS OR 48 HOURS OR 24 HOURS PRIOR TO A HURRICANE OR OTHER TROPICAL STORM MAKING LANDFALL.

AND... THEY'VE ALL BEEN ADVISED TO CAREFULLY CONSIDER WHETHER IT'S PRUDENT TO REQUIRE A VESSEL TO PUT TO SEA OR TO DENY A VESSEL PERMISSION TO ENTER A PORT.

TO SOME IN THE AUDIENCE, THIS MAY NOT SEEM LIKE SUCH A BIG DEAL... BUT TO THE SHIPPERS THAT OPERATE ALONG OUR GULF COAST AND ATLANTIC SEABOARD, IT IS.

AND... IT WAS ACCOMPLISHED MERELY BY COMMUNICATING WITH ONE ANOTHER.

WILL ADMIRAL SHKOR'S FIELD GUIDANCE ON HURRICANE
PREPAREDNESS SATISFY EVERYONE?

ADMIRAL SHKOR DOESN'T THINK SO... AND NEITHER DO I...
BUT THAT'S NOT THE POINT.

NO... WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS THAT THOSE INTERESTED PARTIES
TALKED WITH ONE ANOTHER... COMMUNICATED WITH
ONE ANOTHER... TO COME UP WITH A BETTER WAY OF
DOING BUSINESS.

AND... THAT'S HOW I SEE THE MTS INITIATIVE UNFOLDING.

NOT EVERYBODY WILL GET WHAT HE OR SHE WANT WITH MTS.
NOT EVERYBODY WILL BE HAPPY WITH WHAT'S
DECIDED... AND, NOT EVERYBODY WILL THINK WE ARE
MOVING AS FAST AS WE SHOULD BE.

BUT,

EVERYBODY WILL GET HIS OR HER SAY.

AND THAT'S A CHALLENGE I LAY BEFORE YOU HERE THIS
AFTERNOON.

TO MAKE SURE ALL OF US—THE COAST GUARD, OTHER
FEDERAL AGENCIES, VESSEL OPERATORS, SHIPPERS, PORT
INTERESTS, AND OTHERS—KEEP TALKING WITH ONE
ANOTHER ABOUT THE MTS.

TO MAKE SURE WE MAINTAIN THAT CONSTANT BRIDGE-TO-
BRIDGE COMMUNICATIONS TO AVOID ANY COLLISIONS
OR INCIDENTS ALONG OUR JOURNEY TO A MARINE
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM SECOND TO NONE.

NOT THAT WE WILL ALWAYS BE HAPPY WITH OUR PROGRESS...
WE MAY BE ASKED TO HUG THE CHANNEL LINE A BIT
CLOSER THAN WE'D LIKE... OR, TO SLOW DOWN RATHER
THAN OVERTAKE THE VESSEL AHEAD OF US.

BUT WE NEED TO KEEP OUR EYE ON THE GOAL... THAT IS... A
MARINE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM CAPABLE OF
MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO BE WITH YOU THIS
AFTERNOON.